

# Hot Tips

*Good info for the new ham, and old stuff to refresh your memory*



## Check the weather before operating outdoors

There might be a time when you'll want to leave the comfort of your home, and use your radio to help out with a drill, for personal hobby interest, or for an actual emergency. If you plan to operate your radio outside your home, maybe away from *any* permanent shelter, it's a good idea to check the weather forecast before venturing out there. You don't want to rush out and risk damaging your equipment by getting it wet or sunburned or worse; it would be good to know what awaits you.

It might seem obvious to glance outside your big picture window to get a good idea of what's happening currently, but there are a couple of things to consider. One is that you're viewing the weather in its *current* condition, and anybody who's lived in our area knows how quickly weather can change. Another is that not everybody has the luxury of a clear view of the weather from the living room, or any other room, for that matter. Many hams live in apartments or small living spaces that are surrounded by trees, tall fences, or buildings. So, simply looking outside is not always the best idea, but it's a start.

If possible, before going out, get online and check the forecast for the next few hours. If your internet is unavailable, then by all means go outside and get a look at the sky if it's daytime, and estimate which way the clouds are moving. Even at night, you might be able to get some idea of what weather to expect.

You might find out that the equipment you're so used to operating seems to work differently in the out-of-doors for one reason or another. One might be that your equipment can function differently under conditions of higher or lower temperature, greater humidity, or simply because your eyes are unaccustomed to the bright sunlight. Another is that wind, even a slight breeze, can make it difficult for others

to hear you, as it whistles across your microphone. Finally, operating at an unfamiliar location can place you just a little out of your comfort zone, resulting in shivering, stammering, and occasional hesitation.

Because of the nature of our preparation-minded activities, it's ironic to think that the worse the weather is, the more likely our help might be needed. While we tend to experience good weather more often than adverse weather, the likelihood of a communication need seems to increase with the times storms roll through.

Besides creating a nuisance with your microphone, as I had mentioned, wind can easily tear down taps, canopies, and tents, and overturn tables, chairs, and small vehicles, like wagons and bicycles. If you know that you'll be out in a windy condition, bring extra rope, and brush up on your [knot-tying skills](#). Also, bring several bottles of water, because the wind tends to quickly dehydrate us humans.

By the way, if you suspect there'll be lightning coming your way, being outside is not a very good idea; remain indoors, if at all possible. If you must go outside in a lightning storm, stay away from trees, ponds, lakes, hilltops, and mountain ridges. When you hear thunder, the best place for you to be is inside.

So, the bottom line is that operating our equipment outdoors can be fun and different, but it has its challenges. So, ***use good judgment*** and check before going out there, and make sure it's safe for both you and those operating with you.

